

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 NAIROB 08767 130930Z
ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T NAIROBI 8767

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SO, ET, KE
SUBJECT: SOMALI REQUEST FOR U.S. ARMS

REF: (A) STATE 161221, (B) NAIROBI 8621, (C) NAIROBI 8746

1. SUMMARY: KENYA WOULD REACT NEGATIVELY TO ANY PRO-
VISION OF ARMS TO SOMALIA BY THE U.S., THE ONLY QUESTION
IS WHETHER THIS REACTION WOULD BE MUTED AND RESTRAINED
OR WHETHER IT WOULD CAUSE A MAJOR RIFT IN U.S.--KENYA
RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH KENYA ITSELF WISHES TO IMPROVE
RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA, IT FEARS THAT SOMALIA'S SHORT-
TERM OBJECTIVE OF SEIZING THE OGADEN, ONCE SUCCESSFULLY
ACCOMPLISHED, WOULD LEAD ULTIMATELY TO ANNEXATION OF
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NORTHEAST KENYA. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT POTENTIAL
GAINS FOR THE U.S. IN SOMALIA JUSTIFY A DECISION TO PROVIDE
MILITARY ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY WHEN ITS LIKELY USE IS
AGAINST THE TERRITORY OF ANOTHER SOVEREIGN STATE. THE HISTORY
OF SOMALIA, AND ITS REPUTATION AMONG OTHER AFRICAN STATES,
SUGGESTS THAT ANY BENEFITS OF PRYING THE COUNTRY LOOSE FROM SOVIET
CLUTCHES ARE LIKELY TO BE OF UNCERTAIN DURATION AND LIMITED UTILITY

TO OUR INTERESTS IN THIS REGION. END SUMMARY.

2. I FULLY APPRECIATE THE REASONS WHY WE HAVE NOT REJECTED OUT OF HAND SOMALIA'S GARGANTUAN ARMS SHOPPING LIST, AS MENTIONED PARA 6 REFTTEL. NEVERTHELESS, I BELIEVE OUR RESPONSE IN THE END SHOULD BE TO REFUSE ANY LETHAL MILITARY HARDWARE AND TO BE EXTREMELY PARSIMONIOUS WITH NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT.

3. APART FROM ETHIOPIA, KENYA IS OBVIOUSLY THE COUNTRY MOST AFFECTED BY OUR DECISION IN THIS MATTER. AS HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CLEAR (SEE REFS B AND C), KENYA FEELS THAT ANY INCREASE IN SOMALIA'S MILITARY STRENGTH IS TO THE LONG-TERM DETRIMENT OF KENYA'S SECURITY. THIS JUDGEMENT COULD CONCEIVABLY CHANGE IF SOMALIA CREDIBLY RENOUNCED ITS CLAIMS TO NORTHEAST KENYA, BUT NEITHER WE NOR THE KENYANS BELIEVE THIS IS IN THE CARDS.

4. KENYA IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE MENGISTU REGIME, AND IT LOOKS ASKANCE AT THE NEW ETHIOPIAN ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. AT THE SAME TIME, SOMALIA HAS BEEN WOOING KENYA (DESPITE A MISCALCULATION ON THE BORDER TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN THE SOMALIS APPARENTLY TOOK KENYA TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED IN THEIR MOVEMENT OF TROOPS INTO THE OGADEN). KENYA IS NOT REJECTING THESE OVERTURES, AND INDEED FAVORS IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE; FURTHERMORE, KENYA WOULD REGARD A SOVIET EXODUS FROM SOMALIA AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. THUS THERE ARE NUMEROUS REASONS WHY KENYA WOULD WELCOME CLOSER U.S.-SOMALIA
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RELATIONS, AND KENYA WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH SUCH STEPS AS AN ACCELERATED ECONOMIC AID EFFORT. BUT WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, KENYA DOES NOT TRUST SOMALIA AND WOULD BE DEEPLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE USE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SEAL THE NEW U.S.-SOMALI RELATIONSHIP. KENYA WOULD INEVITABLY INTERPRET THIS MOVE AS A CASE OF THE U.S. ATTACHING GREATER IMPORTANCE TO ITS REIVALRY WITH THE USSR THAN TO ITS INTEREST IN A SECURE AND STABLE KENYA. IT MIGHT PROCLAIM ITS DISILLUSIONMENT OPENLY AND INDIGNANTLY, OR IT MIGHT LIMIT ITS ACTIONS TO SMALL GESTURES DESIGNED TO REGISTER UNHAPPINESS, BUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF OPENNESS AND TRUST THAT HAS DEVELOPED BETWEEN KENYA AND THE U.S. IN RECENT YEARS WOULD DEFINITELY BE SCARRED.

5. QUITE APART FROM IMPACT ON KENYA, THERE ARE OTHER FACTORS THAT MAKE IT QUESTIONABLE WHETHER SUPPLYING ARMS TO SOMALIA IS IN OUR INTEREST. WHILE I DEFER OF COURSE TO AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAM'S JUDGEMENT, I BELIEVE THAT ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH SOMALIA'S HISTORY MUST ASK HIMSELF HOW LONG A FREINDSHIP BASED ON ARMS SUPPLY WILL LAST IN SUCH A VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT. IF SIAD IS OUSTED, ARE THERE UNDERLYING COMMON INTERESTS THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BIND THE TWO COUNTRIES TOGETHER? SOMALIA UNDOUBTEDLY SHARES SUCH INTERESTS WITH CERTAIN ARAB COUNTRIES, BUT NOT DEMONSTRABLY WITH THE U.S.

6. MOREOVER, GIVEN THE MISTRUST OF SOMALIA PREVALENT THROUGHOUT MOST OF AFRICA, WILLINGNESS OF THE U.S. TO PROVIDE ARMS WILL GAIN US NO FAVOR ELSEWHERE ON THE CONTINENT. IT WILL BE SEEN AS A PURELY REALPOLITICK MOVE ON THE PART OF A SUPERPOWER. DOMESTIC AMERICAN OPINION MIGHT WELCOME A SHIFT IN SOMALIA'S POLITICAL STANCE AWAY FROM MOSCOW, BUT ANY SOVIET LOSS OF FACILITIES IN BERBERA, KISMAYU, ETC., STANDS TO BE QUICKLY MADE UP FOR IN ETHIOPIA AND SOUTH YEMEN. OUR OWN INTEREST IN MILITARY ACCESS TO SOMALIA FACILITIES WOULD APPEAR TO BE SLIGHT, AT LEAST SO LONG AS WE HAVE DIEGO GARCIA AND ARE WELCOME IN MOMBASA AND ALONG THE COAST OF THE GULF, IRAN AND PAKISTAN.

7. WE SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE USE TO WHICH WEAPONS
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WILL BE PUT BY SOMALIA. FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS MORE THAN LIKELY THAT SOMALIA INTENDS TO MAKE A STRONG BID FOR THE OGADEN BEFORE ETHIOPIA CAN BRING ITSELF FULLY UP TO STRENGTH WITH NEW SOVIET EQUIPMENT. TACTICALLY, WE MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO OFFER A TOKEN TO SOMALIA, BUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF OUR EQUIPMENT BEING USED IN HOSTILITIES ARGUES AGAINST SUPPLYING ANYTHING LETHAL.

8. WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT IS AWARE OF BRITISH POSITION, CONVEYED TO US LOCALLY, THAT EVEN IF UK WISHED TO SUPPLY LARGE QUANTITIES OF SMALL ARMS, THEY HAVE NO INVENTORY FROM WHICH TO DRAW. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THEY WILL BE PLAYIING THIS WITH SOMALIS, BUT ASSUME THEY WILL BEG INABILITY TO DELIVER.

9. FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO REPEAT MY FIRM CONVICTION THAT THE MOST SENSIBLE THING WE CAN DO FOR SOMALIA AND OURSELVES IN THE SHORT AND LONG/TERM IS TRY TO CONVINCE THEM OF THEIR PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND OUR SINCERE WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST THEM IN A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT EFFORT.
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